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## THE IMPACT OF THE PRESENCE OF A DOG ON MOOD

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Students at all educational levels, whether it be middle school, high school, or college, will have an overload of stress and anxiety at one point or another throughout their school years. Adams et al. (2017) report “College students with mental illnesses are about twice as likely as other students to drop out of college” (p.51). College students have a great deal of stress and anxiety that can affect their overall well-being. Animal-assisted interventions are becoming popular among universities because they show interactions between the students and dogs have a positive effect on the student’s health and well-being.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study included 19 Louisiana State University at Alexandria students who volunteered at will. Volunteers included both males and females between the ages of 18-25. They were recruited via GroupMe message the day before meeting.

### **Materials**

The research design of this experimental study is to see the impact of the presence of a dog when the individual interacts with it. Materials included the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (Mayer and Gaschke, 1988), a waiver, consent form, and demographic survey.

### **Procedure**

The participants were asked if they would like to help with this procedure and volunteer some time to fill out the consent form containing information about the procedure, benefits, and risks of participating in this procedure, availability of counseling services, confidentiality, and voluntary participation (see Appendix A), a waiver (see Appendix B) cautioning participant that dog may cause harm during experiment, a demographic survey including questions like class level, age, gender, and the usual amount of interaction with a dog (see Appendix C), and the BMIS form (see Appendix D) which allowed participants to select a roman numeral with the adjective to how they felt before interacting with the dog. If volunteers were allergic to the dogs then they could not participate for health reasons.

### **Discussion**

Results indicated 13 of the certain qualities being statistically significant after interaction with the canine. The hypothesis of RQ1 is supported. The results of this study concluded feelings off happiness, loving, caring, and being content increased and feelings of sadness, grouchy, tiredness, gloomy, nervous, and being fed up decreased after interacting with canine. Significant differences were noted in a majority of feelings except the feelings of jitteriness, calmness, or active.

### **Limitations**

A limitation that impacted the study included the fact that the canine used for the experiment was not a certified therapy dog but instead just a household pet. Another limitation included the time actually allowed to interact with the animal. The study was conducted during a meeting and the director did not want the entire meeting to involve this experiment so the dog was held on a leash a majority of the time instead of being allowed to roam to other students. A final limitation was varying degree of interaction between participant and dog.